

Isaac Damons House
46 Bridge Street
Northampton
Hampshire County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-638

HABS
MASS
8-NORTH
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

ISAAC DAMONS HOUSE

HABS
MASS
8 NORTH
4-

Street Address: 46 Bridge Street (west side of street), Northampton,
Hampshire County, Massachusetts

Present Owner
and Occupant: Northampton Historical Society

Present Use: Historical Museum

Brief Statement
of Significance: Built in 1812, this house is one of the rare extant
examples of a residence built for himself by an
early American builder-architect, and it has been
altered very little.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Isaac Damons and his successors in the family. Willed to the Northampton Historical Society in 1943 /Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, August 1959/. Note: The name is variously spelled "DAMON" and "DAMONS"; in his signatures Isaac Damons consistently used the final "S".
2. Date of erection: 1812 (said to be this date by Jane Damon Smith, granddaughter of the builder) /Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, August 1959/.
3. Architect, builder: Isaac Damons /Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, August 1959/.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: Few. Now (1959) making some repairs. Plaster repaired in 1952-53 /Daily Hampshire Gazette, August 1953/. Partition installed between dining room and rear hall, at indefinite time in mid-nineteenth century /Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, August 1959/. Fretwork balustrade once decorated main cornice and house cornice, but removed at indefinite date, more than 50 years ago /Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, August 1959; undated photograph showing balustrades, in Isaac Damons House/.
5. Important old views:
 - a. Undated photograph showing balustrades, in Isaac Damons House, Northampton, Massachusetts.
 - b. 1875 map view of Northampton, Massachusetts, by Gazette Printing Company.

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- c. Katherine M. Abbott, Old Paths and Legends of the New England Border (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), facing p. 206, photograph of north side doorway.
6. Sources of information:
- a. Interview with Mrs. Thomas M. Shepherd, President of the Northampton Historical Society, August 30, 1959.
 - b. Items in the Daily Hampshire Gazette, 1953, 1954, August 18, 1953; on exhibit in the Isaac Damons House, Northampton, Mass.
 - c. Centennial Hampshire Gazette, September 6, 1886, p. 23; on exhibit in the Isaac Damons House.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1959

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The personal house of a builder-architect, altered very little. Straightforward and simple. Refined detail.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two stories; main section--approximately 41 feet x 26 feet, and rear wing--approximately 32 feet long.
2. Foundations: Stone ashlar. Wooden water-table over projection of foundation wall.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame, clapboards.
4. Chimneys: Brick. Two in main section, one in rear wing. Quite high.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance sheltered by small hip-roofed porch, with two Roman Doric columns recalled by pilasters. Single door with 4 panels plus 2 glazed panels at top. Full-length shutters at sides. Moulded jambs and head. Porch cornice has modillions. Stone floor and steps. North side doorway has stone steps from an old mill, semicircular. Shutters at sides.

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- b. Windows and shutters: 6/6 double-hung sash. Louvred shutters. Heavy wood sills, moulded trim.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip on main section, gable on wing. Asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Box cornice with bed moulding and crown moulding.
- c. Dormers: None.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

- 1. Floor plans: Central hall, 2 main rooms each side. Hall divided into front (stair) portion and back hall, which was formerly part of the dining room. Rear wing is one room wide.
- 2. Stairways: Open. Turned newel post, round rail, square balusters.
- 3. Flooring: Softwood boards, 6" to 13" wide.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered, painted, and papered. Plaster on split wood lath. Two front rooms have furred walls; thick reveal of windows extends to floor.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Six panel.
- 6. Trim: Principal rooms have wood paneled wainscoting. Two principal (front) rooms have fireplaces with mantel shelf--one with coupled colonnettes, one with pilasters. Other rooms have wood base moulding. Corner posts are cased. Door and window trim one-piece moulded wood.
- 7. Hardware: Some thumb-latches, HL hinges. Some doors have butts, knobs.
- 8. Lighting: Electric. No old fixtures.
- 9. Heating: Originally by fireplaces.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: Originally on village street; now threatened by commercial encroachment--a parking lot for supermarket adjoins on south side. Two other houses owned by Northampton Historical Society adjoin to the north. The house faces east on Bridge Street.

2. Enclosures: Open.
3. Outbuildings: Attached shed at rear.
4. Walks: Brick path to entrance.
5. Landscaping: Informal--trees, shrubs, lawn.

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